Please amend the application as follows:

In the Specification

Please replace the paragraphs at page 1, lines 5 through 16 with the following paragraphs:

Serial No. 09/321,090, filed May 28, 1999, entitled A QUORUMLESS CLUSTER USING DISK-BASED MESSAGING, by Richard Frank, Michael Cusson, Joydip Kundu, and Daniel E. O'Shaughnessy, inventors;

Serial No. 09/321,998, filed May 28, 1999, entitled AVOIDING N-SQUARED HEARTBEAT MESSAGING PROBLEM IN AN OPERATING CLUSTER VIA CLOSED LOOP MESSAGING THEME, by Richard Frank, Michael Cusson, Joydip Kundu, and Daniel E. O'Shaughnessy, inventors;

Serial No. 09/322,472, filed May 28, 1999, entitled USING A CLUSTER-WIDE SHARED REPOSITORY TO PROVIDE THE LATEST CONSISTENT DEFINITION OF THE CLUSTER (AVOIDING THE PARTITION-IN-TIME PROBLEM), by Joydip Kundu, Richard Frank, Michael Cusson and Daniel E. O'Shaughnessy, inventors.

Please replace the paragraph at page 10, lines 4 through 9 with the following paragraph:

As described above in conjunction with FIG. 2, the cluster manager 32, in concert with the cluster managers residing on node_ 2 - node_4 14, 16, 18, manages cluster connectivity within the quorumless cluster 10. For the cluster managers to effectively cooperate in the connectivity management endeavor, a facility for sharing data is provided. The shareable storage device 22 of FIG. 1 houses a repository for this data sharing facility.

Please replace the paragraphs in the Abstract, at page 21, lines 3 through 22 with the following paragraphs:

A quorumless network cluster provides a highly available system by addressing the partition-in-space and partition-in-time problems in network clusters.

In a particular solution, a cluster manager (CM) can use disk based messaging to manage the operation of the cluster. Each node within the cluster must have access to a shared disk to operate within the cluster.

A particular methodology can operate the cluster in a closed loop between nodes 1 to N. If a node fails to receive a heartbeat message from its predecessor in the loop, it initiates a cluster reconfiguration by sending a reconfiguration message to each other node in the cluster.

The quorumless cluster can also include a common storage for a cluster definition. Each node may provide a proposed change to the cluster definition, however only a single coordinator node may update the cluster definition and apply the suggested changes.

Amendments to the specification are indicated in the attached "Marked Up Version of Amendments" (pages i - ii).

In the Claims

Please amend Claim(s) 6 and 9.

6. (Amended) The method of Claim 5 wherein determining the figure of merit includes:

determining an alternate figure of merit derived by assessing merit criteria for the member node; and

selecting between the proposed figure of merit and the alternate figure of merit.

9. (Amended) The method of Claim 8 wherein providing the requested node figure of merit includes:

determining an alternate node figure of merit derived by assessing merit criteria for the member node; and

selecting between the proposed node figure of merit and the alternate node figure of merit.

Amendments to the claims are indicated in the attached "Marked Up Version of Amendments" (page iii).